

AMORE

LIFE & LEISURE

Autumn Issue 2026

A Sailor's Sanctuary

Sea-Inspired Living

Payal Jain

Design, Defined

Bangalore After Dark

Inside the Speakeasies

Sweet Sensations

Where Dessert
Meets Design

Director's Cut

On Acting,
Art & Life

Colour. Comfort. Connection.

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AMANDA JOY PURAVANKARA
Whole-Time Director
Puravankara Limited

I wanted to do something I don't usually do in London, so I walked over to the Wallace Collection, almost hidden in plain sight. The collection was formed by the Marquesses of Hertford and Richard Wallace, with pieces collected from across Europe from the 18th and 19th centuries. Paintings that looked like photographs. A pocket watch made with astonishing delicacy. A music box. A piece of furniture with exquisite craftsmanship.

I found myself imagining the lives that once unfolded in those rooms. The meals that were served, the clothes that were worn, the music that played, the guests who arrived, the conversations that lingered after dinner. Objects that were created for use, yet made with such care that they eventually became works of art.

It made me think about the curious human instinct to collect.

We collect objects, certainly. Books we mean to read again. Photographs from places we loved. Ceramics picked up on a holiday. Letters, jewellery, recipes, paintings, little things that would mean almost nothing to anyone else but somehow carry an entire memory for us.

And as we move through life, we collect much more than things.

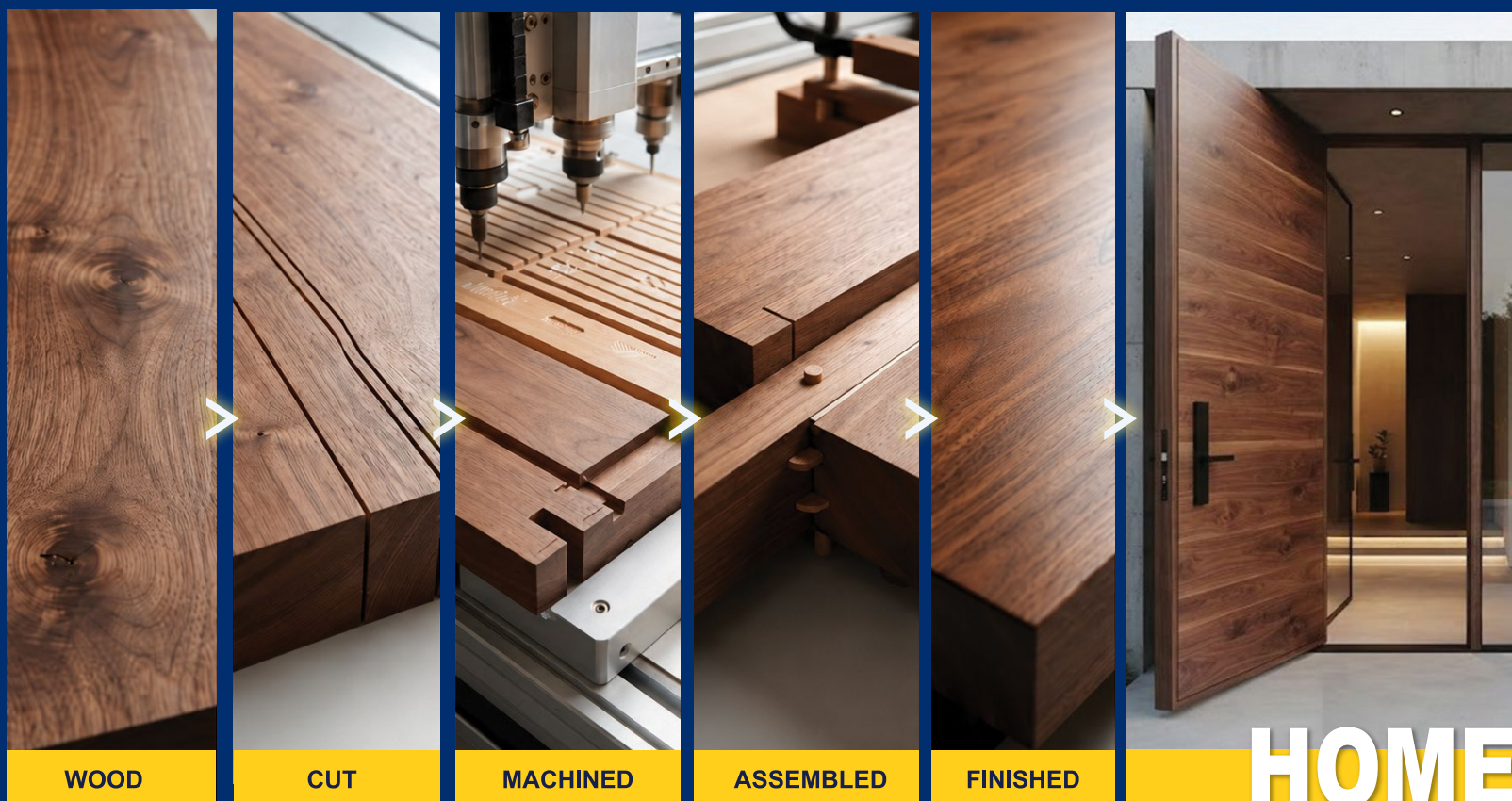
We collect mornings spent around a particular breakfast table. Friends who have known us through several versions of ourselves. Places that changed us. Conversations that arrived at exactly the right moment. We collect stories without always realising that we are doing so.

Perhaps that is what makes a collection so fascinating. It tells us not only what someone valued, but what they wanted to keep close.

So I left wondering: what do you collect—and what, among all the things life gives you, will you choose to keep?

Amanda Joy

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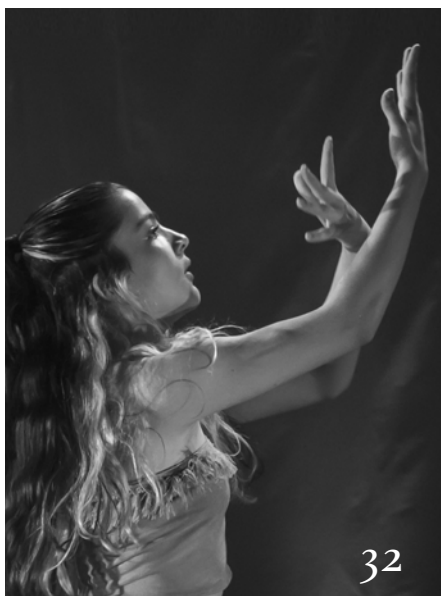
PURVA WOODWORKS

SCAN TO CONNECT



Autumn Issue 2026

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an ode to Linen

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Please Recycle This Paper

editor's note



Dear Readers,

There is something about this time of year that makes us want to slow down and look a little closer.

That spirit runs through these pages.

We welcome celebrated designer Payal Jain to the magazine with a new style column, bringing her distinctive eye to the art of living beautifully. We meet a remarkable power lifter who began her journey in her late forties, a wonderful reminder that it is never too late to surprise yourself. An actor and sailor opens the doors to his stunning nautical-themed homestay, where the sea finds its way into every detail.

We travel in style aboard the Orient Express, indulge in avant-garde desserts that look almost too beautiful to eat, and step inside Bangalore's growing speakeasy scene. I share some personal reflections on the art of 'going Zen'—on finding stillness in a world that rarely stops asking us to move.

And there is much more: places to discover, people to inspire, beautiful things to covet, and ideas to linger over.

So, read a little, dream a little and wander somewhere unexpected!

Shubhra



Samuel Shetty

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The A List

TRENDING RIGHT NOW



LUNE COCKTAIL GLASS BY NICOBAR

Perfect for intimate dinners or festive gatherings.
Set of 4.



MIRAGGIO THEA HOBO HANDBAG

A great companion for work or a weekend getaway.

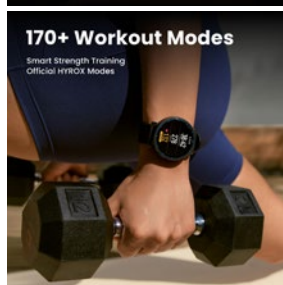
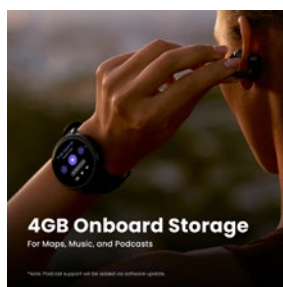


ENCASA XO FARMHOUSE THROW PILLOW COVERS

Beautiful, rich cotton homespun weave fabric, yarn dyed in vibrant colours.

AMAZFIT ACTIVE MAX (SMARTCHOICE) SMART WATCH

3,000-nit display engineered for ultimate clarity, even under the harshest sunlight.



ZURATO MEASURING CUPS AND SPOONS

Stylish and rust-free. Set of 8.



KITCHEN JUNGLE ROASTED EDAMAME

This nutritious alternative to fried snacks is made from carefully selected green soybeans and roasted to perfection.



HOKIPO NATURAL COCONUT COIR MAT

Give your guests an eco-friendly welcome.

ARCHITECTURE OF RARE LIVING.

There is a certain grace in arriving somewhere that was clearly waiting for you. A boutique 20-storey landmark rising above Kudlu Gate on Hosur Road, home to only a few, by design - where 2 & 3 bed residences unfold like quiet sentences, each one an expression of restraint rather than excess. Light moves differently here. Space is not filled, but felt.

This is a life held gently in place - by architecture that asks nothing of you, except to arrive. Just 148 residences, set across 1.68 acres, with nearly 76% given back to open air and a ~17,000 sq. ft. clubhouse waiting beyond the door. A private world to belong to.



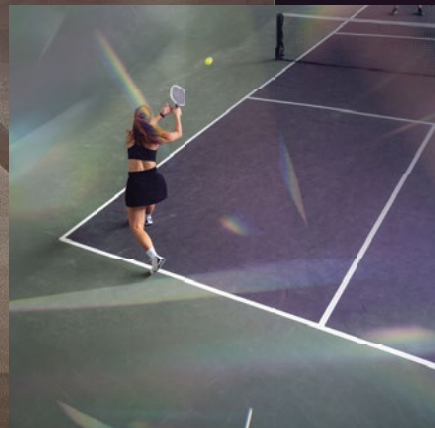
—PRE-LAUNCHING—
**PURVA
HERITAGE**
ON HOSUR ROAD, KUDLU GATE

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Some of life's finest luxuries are measured in time - time to linger over breakfast, time to arrive home before the evening disappears, time to step out when the city calls and return when you choose. With Kudlu Gate Metro just a minute away and the city's important destinations connected around you, Purva Heritage brings a rare sense of ease to the everyday.



An Address Meant to be Inherited.



AMORE



WHICH FABRIC IS BEST FOR SOFA UPHOLSTERY IF I HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN AT HOME?

 Devika, Mumbai

Performance fabrics are your best bet — they're woven or treated to resist stains, spills and general wear far better than natural linen or silk blends. Look for a tight weave with a high rub count (above 30,000 on the Martindale scale) and a stain-resistant finish. Darker, textured fabrics also hide everyday marks better than pale, smooth ones. Leather and faux leather are worth considering too, since spills wipe off instantly, though they can feel warm in summer. Choose comfort and durability now — you can always reupholster once the children are older.

ARE BRASS FITTINGS A GOOD CHOICE FOR KITCHEN TAPS, OR DO THEY NEED TOO MUCH UPKEEP?

 Jai, Delhi

Solid brass fittings are excellent for durability — they resist corrosion, handle daily use well, and often outlast cheaper alternatives by decades. The trade-off is finish maintenance: unlacquered brass develops a natural patina over time, which some people love and others don't, while lacquered brass stays shiny but can scratch or wear at the edges eventually. If you want the look without the fuss, choose a PVD-coated brass finish — it combines brass's strength with a scratch- and tarnish-resistant coating that needs virtually no upkeep.



WHY DOES MY HOMEMADE BREAD TASTE FINE BUT COME OUT TOO CRUMBLY TO SLICE PROPERLY?

 *Neha, Ahmedabad*

Crumbly bread usually points to too little gluten development or too much flour. Make sure you're kneading long enough — the dough should turn smooth and elastic, passing the "windowpane test" where a small stretched piece doesn't tear easily. Also let the bread cool completely before slicing; cutting into warm bread disrupts the crumb structure before it's had time to set. If the crumbliness persists, try increasing hydration slightly, as a wetter dough often bakes into a more cohesive loaf.



I DON'T HAVE SPACE OUTSIDE MY FRONT DOOR TO KEEP SLIPPERS — ANY PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS?

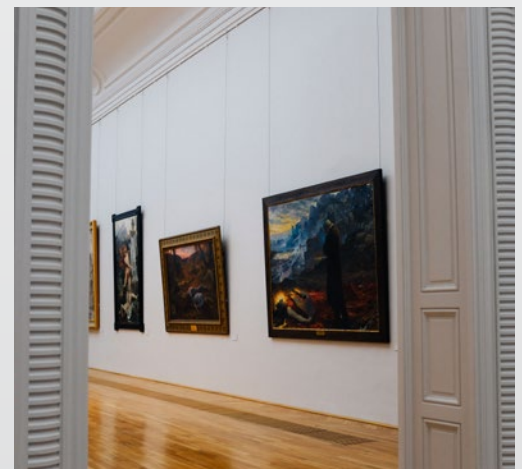
 *Priya, Hyderabad*

A slim shoe cabinet just inside the door solves this without eating into hallway space — even a 6 to 8 inch deep unit holds several pairs upright. If indoor space is tight too, a wall-mounted shoe rack behind the door itself is often overlooked and works well for slippers specifically, since they're light. Another option is a stackable, ventilated shoe box system that sits flush against a corner. Whatever you choose, keep it near the door but out of the direct walking path, so it doesn't become an obstacle in a small entryway.

HOW SHOULD I GO ABOUT BUYING ORIGINAL ART, AND WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAINTAIN IT WELL?

 *Vikram, Chennai*

Buy what genuinely holds your attention first — resale value is a distant second consideration unless you're buying purely as an investment. When purchasing, ask for provenance documentation and a certificate of authenticity, and buy from galleries or artists with a traceable body of work rather than unverified online sellers. For maintenance, keep artwork away from direct sunlight and humidity, both of which fade pigments and warp canvases or paper over time. Have oil paintings inspected every few years for surface grime, and frame works on paper with UV-protective, acid-free glass to prevent yellowing. A stable environment matters more than expensive restoration later.



Got a burning home decor dilemma or a kitchen conundrum you need advice on? Send your queries to [<amore@puravankara.com>](mailto:amore@puravankara.com) with your name and city, and you might see your question featured in the next issue of Ask Amore!

m m Javeed
Homini Designer

YOUR LUXURY WEAR SPECIALIST



DECORATE

IDEAS & INSPIRATION ON HOW TO MAKE
YOUR HOME A BEAUTIFUL SANCTUARY



A SAILOR'S HOMESTAY

Nestled in the garden city of Chandigarh, Anchorage 42 is the distinctive luxury homestay of Capt. Inderpreet Singh Dhanoa (Dan Dhanoa) and Nandita Puri Dhanoa.

“
The house
has a very
Mediterranean
stucco-finish white
exterior with a
nautical flair.”



Master Mariner who sailed oil tankers across the world for over three decades, Dan is also a familiar face in Indian cinema, having appeared in nearly 70 films. You might remember him as a villain in Amitabh Bachchan's *Mard* (1984). He is also an accomplished sculptor and passionate collector.

Nandita Puri Dhanoa, a renowned Kathak dancer of the Jaipur Gharana, has performed extensively in India and abroad. She has also appeared in Indian cinema and television. Nandita runs her own dance academy, too.

At Anchorage 42, art is woven into the experience. Besides their warm hospitality, enjoy an astonishing collection of Indian contemporary art, alongside works from Southeast Asia and an eclectic collection of vintage porcelain from Europe, Japan, China and beyond. Surrounded by palms, bamboo, ferns, fruit trees and flowering shrubs, this remarkable retreat offers a rare blend of art, heritage, nature and tranquil luxury.



A beautiful terrace. The sitting area is surrounded with old traditional Indian sculptures and aromatic “Frangipani” (Champa).

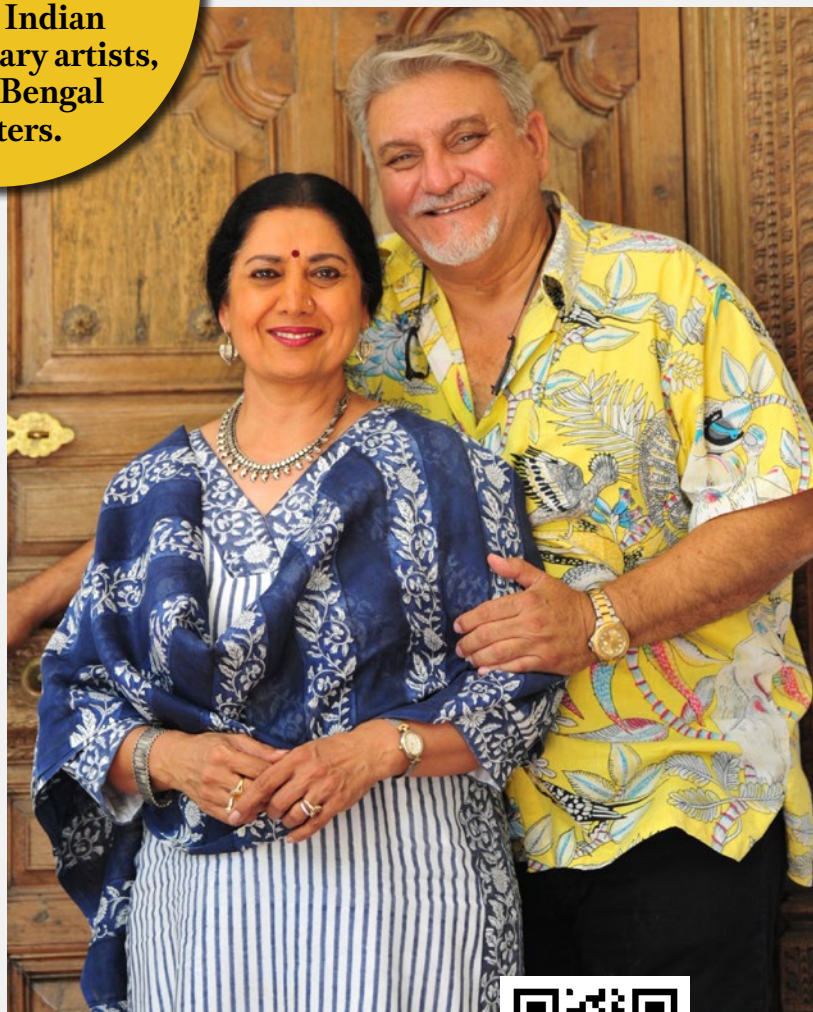


“
The nautical-themed
bar boasts vintage
artefacts from scrapped
ships at Alang,
Bhavnagar and
from Mumbai's
Chor Bazar.





“
The walls of the
homestay are filled
with artworks of
famous Indian
contemporary artists,
mostly Bengal
Masters.”



Inderpreet Singh Dhanoa & Nandita Puri Dhanoa

Scan the QR code to
connect with Anchorage 42



Oho! That's Boho!

Boho-chic. A décor style that says
'free spirit with a curated eye.'

YOU LOVE BOHO-CHIC IF:



You are naturally creative, drawn to storytelling, and inherently relaxed about life.



You are a collector rather than consumer, treasuring a vintage find from a weekend market far more than a flawless showroom piece.



Travel, art, and nature are your primary inspirations



You value comfort and warmth over rigid perfectionism.



You are entirely comfortable with a bit of beautiful chaos, viewing your home as an evolving canvas rather than a finished project.

Did we hear you say,
oho, so that's boho?

There's more!



6 Elements That Spell *Boho-Chic*



A Warm, Sun-Kissed Palette:

Think terracotta, ochre, rust, and sage. These rich, earthy tones provide a grounded base, while crisp creams offer breathing room and prevents the space from looking muddy.



Layered, Tactile Textiles:

Visual depth comes from mixing textures rather than colours. Layer a shaggy Moroccan rug over a flat-woven jute base, and toss velvet, linen, and block-printed cotton cushions together on the seating.



Natural and Vintage Furniture:

Avoid matching sets. Instead, pair low-slung rattan chairs or woven cane daybeds with weathered wooden tables and mid-century find for a lived-in, collected feel.



Abundant, Unruly Greenery:

Houseplants are essential. Cascade pothos from shelves, place substantial fiddle-leaf figs in woven baskets, and cluster terracotta pots at varying heights to bring organic life indoors.



Low, Ambient Lighting: Ditch the harsh overhead lights. Rely instead on large woven rattan pendants to diffuse soft patterns, complemented by brass floor lamps and plenty of candles to create a warm, inviting glow.



The Curated Vignette: Cluster meaningful objects on shelves and surfaces. Arrange a few art books, a ceramic vessel, and a travel memento together to tell a personal story without creating clutter.





“

Boho-chic is inherently suited for Indian homes because our design DNA is already rooted in a love for rich textiles, handcrafted elements and earthy tones. It allows us to effortlessly celebrate our heirloom brass, vibrant block prints, and natural materials like cane and terracotta, creating spaces that feel deeply personal, warm, and lived-in.

- Manjul Misra

lifestyle and design journalist



Master of *Boho-Chic*



Justina Blakeney (USA)

The undisputed queen of modern boho, known for her “Jungalow” aesthetic. She pioneered the vibrant, plant-filled, maximalist style that defines contemporary bohemian living.

Known for her exceptional ability to harmonize vibrant colours, bold patterns, and the natural beauty of plants, Justina crafts spaces that are homey, unconventional, and infused with a touch of the wild.

Named one of “The 20 most famous Interior Designers Working Today” by Architectural Digest.



@thejungalow – For high-energy colour, tropical plant styling, and bold pattern mixing.





DESIGNING A COSY PERSONAL SANCTUARY

By Neha Changwani



A cosy space is not created by adding more. It is created by thoughtfully choosing less, while ensuring every element contributes to comfort. A bedroom, especially, should feel like a personal retreat—a space where you can truly unwind after a long day and disconnect from the outside world. Designing such a space is about engaging all the senses through colour, light, texture, materials and thoughtful planning. When every element works in harmony, the room becomes more than just aesthetically pleasing—it becomes a sanctuary that nurtures your everyday life.





One of the first decisions that instantly transforms the feeling of a room is keeping the walls and ceiling in the same colour. When they flow seamlessly into one another, the room begins to feel like a cocoon—soft, calming and enveloping. Instead of drawing attention to the boundaries of the room, the eye experiences one continuous surface, making the space feel serene. In this bedroom, a soothing lime wash finish was chosen for both the walls and ceiling. Lime wash has a beautiful depth and movement that changes subtly as natural light shifts through the day. Its soft, cloudy texture adds character without overwhelming the space, creating warmth that a flat painted wall often cannot. Its natural, earthy finish brings an understated elegance while allowing the architecture and furnishings to take centre stage.

Lighting is another element that plays a crucial role in making a space feel cosy. Rather than relying on a single ceiling light, layering different sources of light creates flexibility for different moods and moments. Here, the bedside lamp and reading light are integrated into a single unit, offering two functions through one thoughtfully designed element. Concealed cove lighting softly highlights the scenic wall covering behind the bed, while the ceiling lights are dimmable and tunable, allowing the intensity and colour temperature to change according to the weather, the time of day and one's mood. The ability to modulate light is a deeply personal aspect of designing a home. Bright, energising light serves a purpose, but softer, warmer lighting helps the mind relax and prepares the body for rest.

The choice of materials is equally important. A bedroom should feel gentle to touch, not just beautiful to look at. Natural materials such as cotton and linen have an inherent softness and breathability that significantly enhance comfort. Linen upholstery for the headboard, cotton and linen bed linen, textured curtains and woven accents together create a layered tactile experience. The wall-to-wall upholstered headboard further enhances this feeling by visually widening the room and gently wrapping the bed, reinforcing the cocoon-like quality of the space. These natural fibres regulate temperature well, age gracefully and contribute to a restful sleeping environment. Comfort often comes from what we feel rather than what we immediately see.

Visual calm is closely connected to physical order. Even the most beautifully designed room loses its sense of serenity when everyday items are left on display. Thoughtful storage planning ensures everything has a designated place. In this project, storage was customised around the client's daily routine. A dedicated drawer allows electronic devices to be charged while remaining completely tucked away, eliminating visible cables and clutter. Appliances were planned well in advance so that sockets are exactly where they are needed while remaining discreetly concealed. Additional sockets have also been provided for bedside lamps whenever required, offering flexibility without compromising the clean aesthetic. Good design often



*Good design
often lies in
anticipating
needs before they
arise, making
everyday living
feel effortless.*



lies in anticipating needs before they arise, making everyday living feel effortless.

Every cosy space also benefits from an element that tells a story. Here, a custom scenic wall covering with a soft watercolour effect transforms the wall into a dreamy landscape. Gentle mountains, a quiet lake, tiny cottages and flowering meadows create a scene that almost transports you elsewhere. Despite containing many colours, the muted palette keeps the composition soothing rather than overwhelming. Whether through artwork, wallpaper or a cherished object, introducing one meaningful focal point adds personality and creates an emotional connection to the space.

Perhaps the most overlooked principle in creating a cosy bedroom is restraint. Fewer colours often create greater calm. Limiting the material palette allows each element to breathe and gives the room a richer, more timeless quality. In this bedroom, the palette has intentionally been kept simple—one walnut veneer carried across the bed, bedside tables, wardrobes and even the handles; one marble finish; and one consistent lime wash colour enveloping the space. This consistency creates quiet harmony, allowing texture and craftsmanship to take centre stage instead of excessive variation.

Natural daylight is just as important as artificial lighting. Soft sheer curtains gently filter sunlight, reducing harsh glare while maintaining a bright and airy atmosphere. As daylight moves through the room, it interacts beautifully with the lime wash finish and natural materials, creating subtle shifts in depth and warmth throughout the day. These changing qualities make the room feel alive, yet peaceful, reinforcing the connection between nature and the home.

A cosy space should also reflect the people who live in it. While thoughtful design lays the foundation, it is the personal touches that make a room truly feel like home. Whether it's a favourite book by the bedside, a cherished photograph, meaningful artwork, fresh flowers or a handcrafted object collected during travels, these details create an emotional connection to the space. The key is to curate rather than accumulate. A few carefully

chosen pieces often have a far greater impact than filling every surface. When a bedroom reflects your routines, memories and personality, it becomes more than just a well-designed room—it becomes a space that restores and comforts you every day.

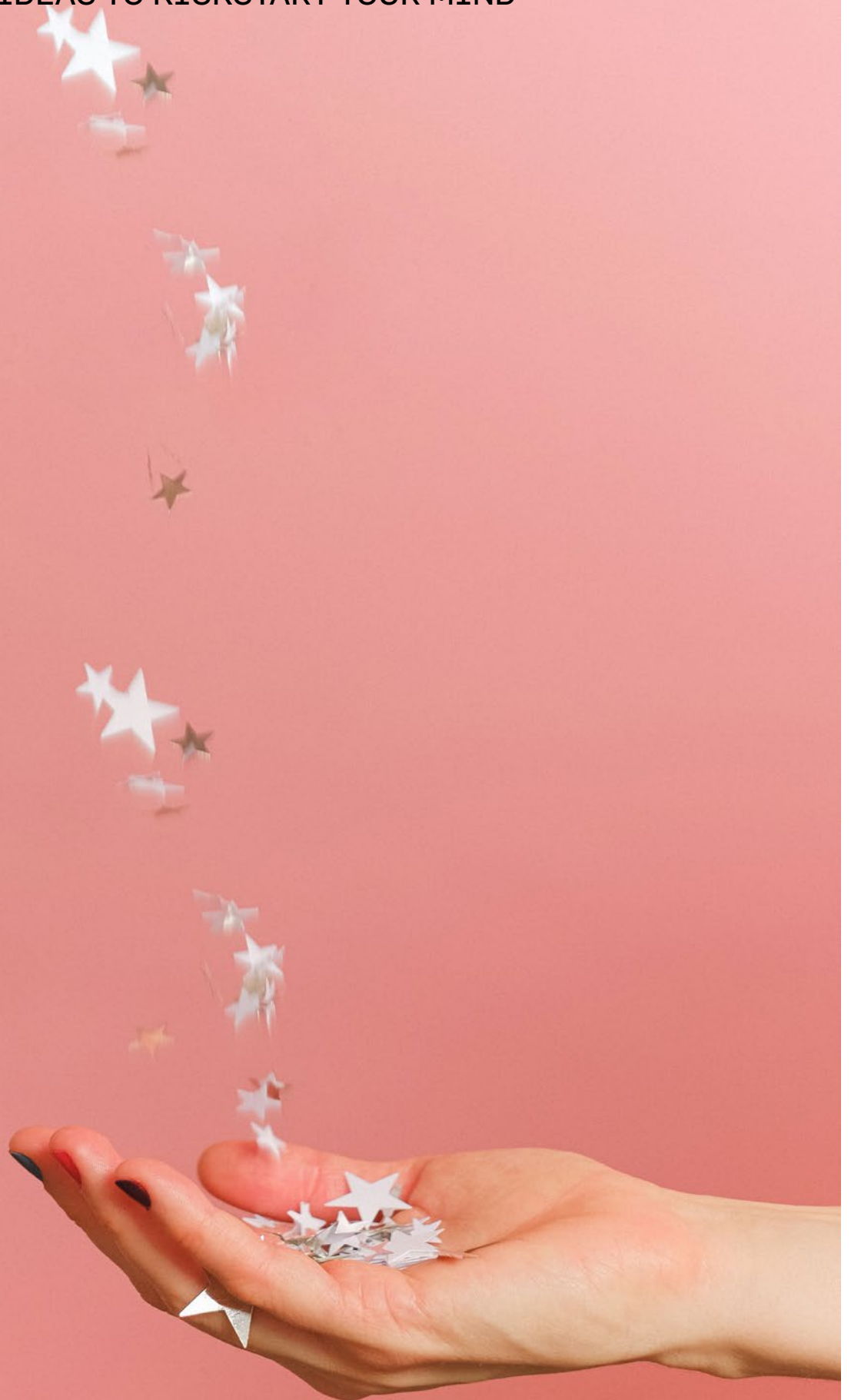
Ultimately, a cosy personal space is not defined by trends or expensive décor. It is created through thoughtful planning, carefully chosen materials, layered lighting, concealed functionality and a restrained palette that allows the mind to rest. When every design decision supports comfort instead of competing for attention, a bedroom becomes much more than a beautiful room—it becomes a personal sanctuary that quietly restores you, day after day.



Neha Changwani is the founder of INC design studio
Instagram: @inc_designstudio

INSPIRATION

IDEAS TO KICKSTART YOUR MIND



THE THEATRE OF LIFE

“
One piece of
advice I give every
student before
they leave NSD
is this: don't take
the actor in you to
the film set.”



National School of Drama Director **Chittaranjan Tripathy** on why great acting begins with understanding people, the timeless wisdom of the *Mahabharata*, and why AI can never replace artistic intelligence.

By Shubhra Krishan



met Chittaranjan Tripathy, Director of the National School of Drama, at the NSD campus in New Delhi. His office reflects the institution itself—lived-in, creative and buzzing with ideas—but what struck me most wasn't the setting. It was the man.

Despite an illustrious career spanning theatre, films, television and music, Tripathy is refreshingly unaffected. Soft-spoken, warm and wonderfully articulate, he speaks with the quiet confidence of someone who has spent a lifetime asking questions rather than chasing applause.

An NSD alumnus who returned to lead India's premier theatre institution, he has directed landmark productions, composed music for the stage and appeared in films such as *Talvar*, *Phantom*, *Shaandaar*, *Mukkabaaz* and *Delhi-6*, besides the acclaimed series *Sacred Games* and *Hostages*. Yet our conversation rarely lingered on his achievements. Instead, it meandered through Shakespeare, the *Mahabharata*, artificial intelligence, patience, artistic discipline and why understanding people is the most important skill an actor can possess.

By the end of an hour, I realised I hadn't simply interviewed the director of NSD. I'd spent time with someone who sees theatre not as an art form separate from life, but as one of its greatest teachers.

Over to him...

STORIES NEVER GO OUT OF STYLE

People often ask me whether Gen Z and artificial

intelligence are changing theatre. My answer is simple: generations will come and go, technology will continue to evolve, but the passion to stand before a live audience and tell a story will never disappear.

Natyashastra may have been written centuries ago, yet the essence of theatre remains unchanged. The way we present stories evolves, but the emotions at their core—love, ambition, grief, jealousy and hope—remain timeless. That's why Shakespeare still feels contemporary. So does Chekhov. Great theatre survives because it understands human beings.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE VS ARTISTIC INTELLIGENCE

I'm not opposed to AI. It has its place, especially in the technical aspects of theatre. It can simplify processes, improve efficiency and become a valuable creative tool.

But I tell my students one thing over and over again: Artificial Intelligence should never replace Artistic Intelligence.

Use AI to assist you, not to think for you.

Artistic intelligence comes from curiosity. It comes from observing people, making mistakes, asking questions and experiencing life. No machine can replace that journey.

BOOKS THAT CHANGED THE WAY I SEE THE WORLD

People often ask me which books every actor should read. I always recommend these.

Manwatching by Desmond Morris. It teaches you to observe people—their gestures, body language and the silent conversations they have without words.



Natyashastra—the foundation of Indian theatre. It is not merely a technical manual but a profound guide to performance, emotion and aesthetics.

Observe people. Understand people. Then learn how to portray them. That, for me, is the journey of every artist.

THE MAHABHARATA: THE GREATEST ACTING LESSON

People often think the *Mahabharata* is a book about morality. I see it differently. To me, it is one of the greatest books ever written on human nature.

It changes you from idealistic to realistic.

Life is rarely divided into heroes and villains. People are far more complex than that. They are often, as I like to say, rightfully wrong and wrongfully right. Every character in the epic carries contradictions, and every difficult choice comes at a price. That is precisely what makes them so real. As actors, our job is not to judge a character but to understand what drives them.

The *Mahabharata* also teaches one of the hardest lessons an artist has to learn—patience.

Young actors often become disheartened when work doesn't come their way. They begin to question their talent, their choices and even their future. At such times, I remind them of Arjuna during his *Agyatvas*. The greatest warrior of his age spent a year in disguise as Brihannala, teaching dance and music in the court of King Virata. His circumstances had changed, but his identity had not. He didn't spend that year lamenting what he had lost. He accepted the phase he was in, continued practising his art and waited for the right time to reclaim his destiny.

There is a profound lesson in that for every artist.

There will be seasons when the phone doesn't ring, auditions don't lead anywhere and opportunities seem painfully out of reach. Those moments are not a measure of your worth. They are simply another chapter in your journey. Use them to learn, to observe, to practise and to grow.

Every artist has an *Agyatvas*.

The important thing is not to lose faith in your craft while you are living through it.



LEAVE YOUR EGO AT THE STUDIO DOOR

One piece of advice I give every student before they leave NSD is this: don't take the actor in you to the film set.

It may sound contradictory, but what I mean is this—don't arrive carrying a fixed idea of how your character should look, speak or behave. Don't walk in thinking, *This is how I will perform the role*.

Your first responsibility is to understand the director's vision.

Every director creates a unique world. Every film has its own rhythm, emotional landscape and language. Before you begin building your character, you must first understand the story the director wants to tell and the world he or she is trying to create. Only then can you discover where your character truly belongs within it.

At NSD, we train our students not merely to become good performers, but to become sensitive collaborators. Theatre is, by its very nature, a collective art. It teaches you to listen, to respond, to trust your fellow actors and, above all, to trust the director's vision. Acting is never about drawing attention to yourself; it is about serving the story with honesty.

The finest actors are not those who insist on doing things their own way. They are the ones who have the sensitivity and confidence to surrender their ego to the larger creative vision. They understand that a memorable performance is not created in isolation—it emerges from collaboration, from listening, and from becoming an integral part of a story that is bigger than any one individual. When an actor stops trying to prove how talented they are and starts asking, *What does this story need from me?*—that is when truly great performances begin.

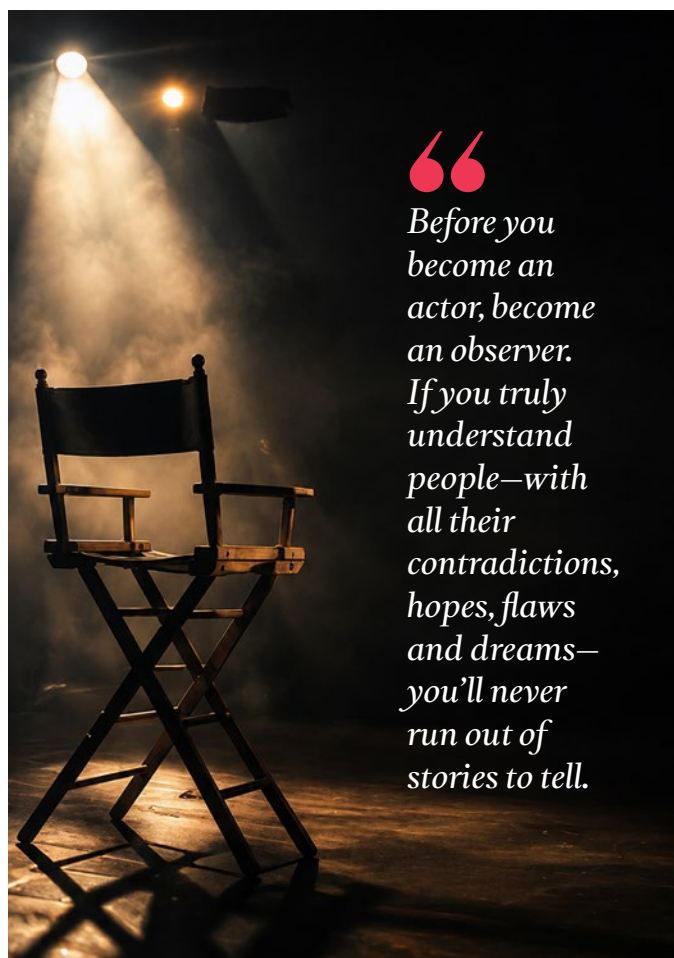
THE PLAYS EVERYONE SHOULD EXPERIENCE

If you're serious about theatre, begin with Shakespeare. His tragedies and comedies continue to explore the full spectrum of human emotion—love, ambition, betrayal, power and redemption—with a depth that remains astonishingly relevant even today. Every generation finds its own Shakespeare because his characters never stop revealing new truths about themselves and about us.

Then come Anton Chekhov and Henrik Ibsen. Chekhov's seemingly quiet dramas uncover the extraordinary emotional currents that run beneath ordinary lives, while Ibsen's plays challenge social conventions and moral certainties with remarkable psychological insight. Together, they remind us that great drama isn't driven by spectacle, but by the complexity of human relationships.

Among Indian works, I would recommend Mohan Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure*, a landmark of modern Hindi theatre that examines fractured relationships, identity and the quiet loneliness that can exist within a family. *Taj Mahal Ka Tender* is another favourite—not only because of its razor-sharp wit and satire, but because its commentary on bureaucracy and society remains as relevant today as when it was first written. And then there is Kalidasa's *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, one of the greatest works of classical Sanskrit literature, celebrated for its lyrical beauty, emotional richness and timeless exploration of love, memory and destiny.

These plays belong to different centuries, languages and cultures, yet they are united by a common thread. They are rooted in a deep understanding of people. Fashions change, politics changes, technology changes—but human nature rarely does. That is why these works continue to move audiences across generations.



“
Before you
become an
actor, become
an observer.
If you truly
understand
people—with
all their
contradictions,
hopes, flaws
and dreams—
you'll never
run out of
stories to tell.

DREAM ROLES

People assume every actor dreams of playing the biggest role. I don't think that way. Of course, I would love to play Hamlet. There is no age for Hamlet, and every generation discovers a different interpretation of him. My other dream role surprises people. It is the *rahgir*—the unnamed passer-by in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. He appears only briefly, yet to me it is one of the finest pieces of characterisation ever written. It taught me that the greatness of a role has nothing to do with its length. A character may be on stage for only a few moments and still leave the deepest impression. That role reminds me that greatness in acting isn't measured by the number of lines you speak. Sometimes a single entrance can stay with an audience forever.

THE GREATEST LESSON THEATRE HAS TAUGHT ME

Theatre has taught me many things, but perhaps the most important is this: before you become an actor, become an observer.

If you truly understand people—with all their contradictions, hopes, flaws and dreams—you'll never run out of stories to tell.

Boarding Now

*One legendary train, three
unforgettable days and memories
that last a lifetime.*



In our free time, we like to dream. All right, daydream. And every now and then, we stumble upon a journey so enchanting that we simply have to share it. For travellers, few experiences are as mythical as boarding the Orient Express. We haven't taken the trip ourselves—at least not yet—but we've spent hours reading about it, watching it unfold through the eyes of those who have, and piecing together what must surely be one of the world's most extraordinary rail journeys. Come aboard with us as we imagine what it's like.

The moment you step aboard the midnight-blue carriages of the Orient Express at Paris's Gare de l'Est, something shifts. A steward greets you with a chilled glass of champagne, the carriage door closes with a reassuring click, and suddenly the rush of airports, traffic and deadlines feels very far away. Life slows to the gentle rhythm of steel wheels gliding over the tracks.

Your cabin isn't large, but that's hardly the point. Every surface has been crafted with extraordinary care. Polished marquetry walls gleam in the afternoon light, Art Deco details catch your eye at every turn, and plush furnishings invite you to settle in by the window as the French countryside slips past in shades of green and gold. Before long, your steward appears with tea and delicate pastries, and you realise that on this journey, time isn't something to chase—it's something to savour.





As evening falls, the train takes on an entirely different personality. Guests change into black tie and evening gowns, turning the short walk to the dining car into an event in itself. Each carriage has its own character: one adorned with stunning Lalique glass panels, another finished in glossy black lacquer. Dinner is every bit as memorable as the setting. Seasonal ingredients are sourced along the route, transformed into elegant multi-course meals and paired with exceptional wines. Afterwards, most passengers drift towards Bar Car 3674, where a pianist plays softly on a baby grand while cocktails are mixed with theatrical flair. It's glamorous without feeling overdone—the sort of evening that reminds you why train travel once held such romance.



The next morning, you wake to an entirely new landscape. France has given way to Italy, and the view outside your window is all sunlit hillsides, olive groves and glimpses of the Mediterranean. Breakfast is served in your cabin—fresh croissants, espresso and fruit—while the scenery quietly steals the show.



Later in the day, the journey includes a private tour of Pompeii, allowing guests to explore one of the world's most extraordinary archaeological sites with far fewer crowds than usual.

The final chapter unfolds not on the rails but high above the Amalfi Coast in Ravello. Your destination is Caruso, an eleventh-century palace transformed into one of Italy's most spectacular hotels. After two days in the cosy cocoon of the train, the sweeping sea views feel almost cinematic. Frescoed ceilings, fragrant lemon trees and jasmine-filled gardens set the scene for an unforgettable finale. Spend the afternoon beside the famous infinity pool, where the water

seems to merge with the sea below, before lingering over dinner beneath a canopy of stars.

The Orient Express has never really been about getting from one place to another. It's about rediscovering the pleasure of the journey itself—of dressing for dinner, lingering over conversations, watching landscapes unfold from your window and allowing yourself to travel at a pace that modern life rarely permits.

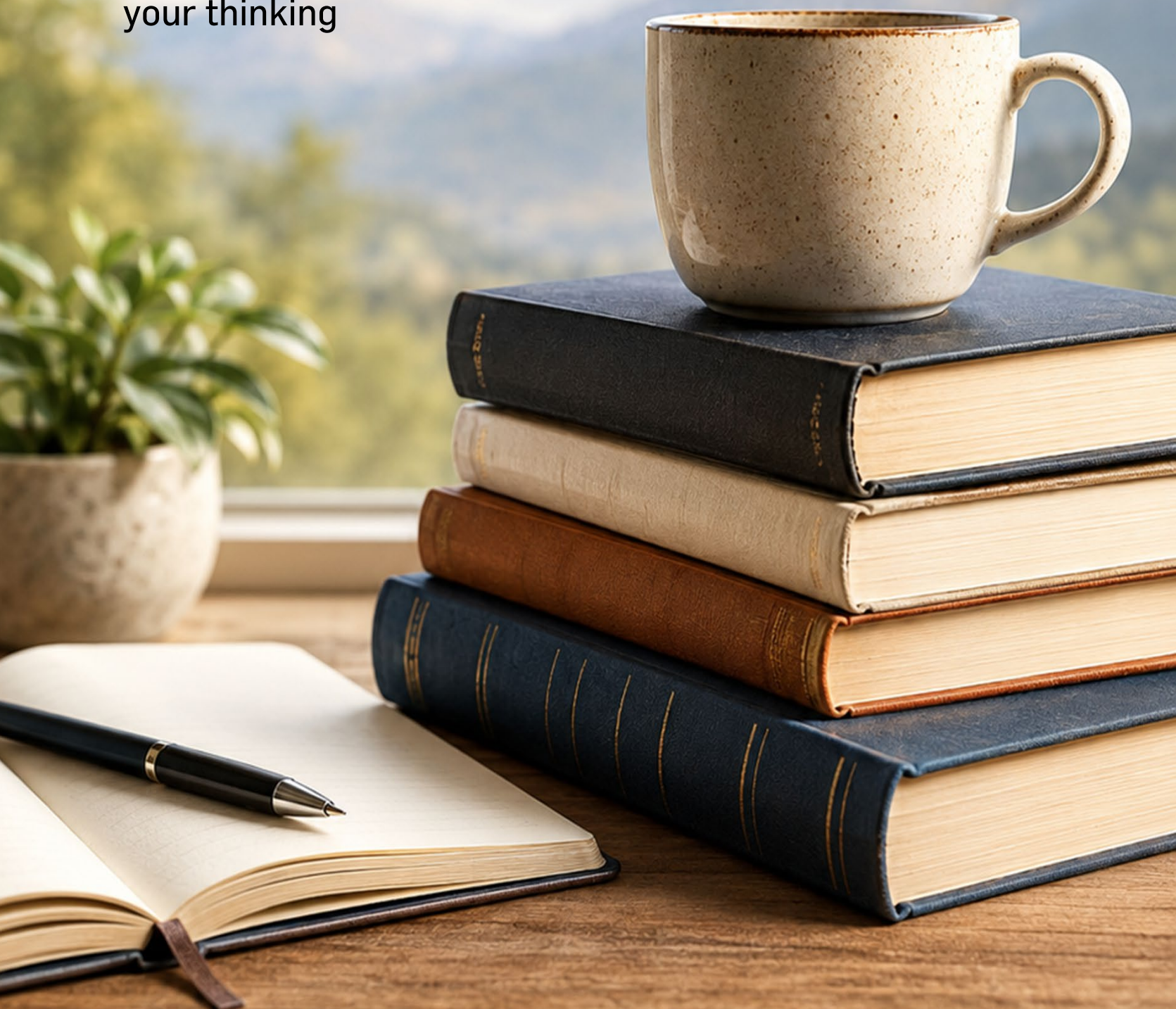
Prices reflect the experience. The three-day, all-inclusive journey starts at around US\$12,800 per person for a Historic Twin Cabin, where upper and lower berths transform into a comfortable lounge during the day. Cabin Suites, which offer more space and private en-suite bathrooms, start at around US\$24,900 per person, while the luxurious Grand Suites begin at approximately US\$36,000 per person and include separate living areas and marble bathrooms.

Perhaps one day we'll experience the Orient Express for ourselves. Until then, we're happy to keep dreaming, planning and collecting stories like this one. After all, every great journey begins long before you pack a suitcase—it begins with imagination. And if this little daydream has earned the Orient Express a place on your bucket list too, we'd say our work here is done.



Read & Reflect

Fresh non-fiction books to inspire, guide, and challenge your thinking



THE NEXT MOUNTAIN: NOTES ON RESILIENCE, LEADERSHIP AND PURPOSE

By Avinash Kaul with Priya Kumar | HarperCollins India

From a teenage refugee forced to flee Kashmir in 1990 to becoming one of India's youngest media CEOs, Avinash Kaul shares an inspiring memoir of grit, leadership and reinvention. Blending personal experiences with practical lessons, *The Next Mountain* is a thoughtful guide to resilience, purpose and navigating life's toughest climbs.



A BILLION BETS: THE MAKING OF INDIA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

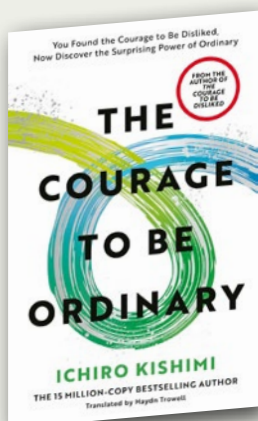
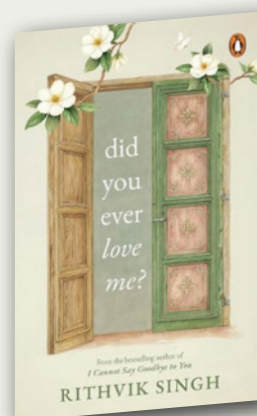
By Aviral Bhatnagar | Penguin India

Venture capitalist Aviral Bhatnagar chronicles the rise of India's start-up ecosystem through the stories of founders, investors and innovators who took bold risks long before unicorns became commonplace. Blending insider insights with untold anecdotes, *A Billion Bets* offers a compelling look at the people and ideas that reshaped Indian entrepreneurship.

DID YOU EVER LOVE ME?

By Rithvik Singh | Penguin India (Ebury Press)

Bestselling author Rithvik Singh returns with a deeply personal collection of reflections and prose on love, heartbreak, healing and self-worth. Written for readers who feel deeply, *Did You Ever Love Me?* is an uplifting reminder to let go, rediscover yourself and embrace the love you deserve.



THE COURAGE TO BE ORDINARY

By Ichiro Kishimi | Penguin Random House

From the bestselling author of *The Courage to Be Disliked* comes a thought-provoking guide to escaping the pressure to be exceptional. Drawing on Adlerian psychology, *The Courage to Be Ordinary* argues that true confidence and happiness come not from standing out, but from embracing your authentic self and letting go of constant comparison.

DESI DISRUPTORS: TIMELESS LESSONS FROM ICONIC INDIAN BRANDS

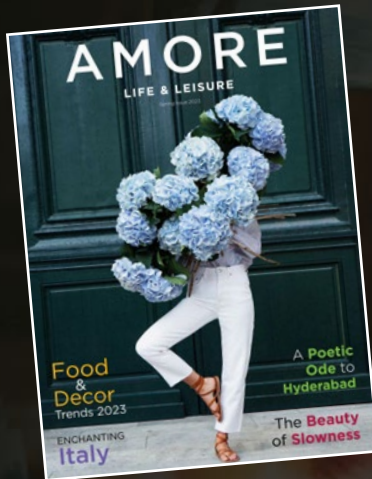
By Vispy Doctor & Vikrant Pande | HarperCollins India

What made brands like Maggi, Thums Up, Tanishq, Whisper and Lenskart household names? *Desi Disruptors* uncovers the stories behind India's most iconic brands, revealing how they transformed consumer behaviour and built enduring success through innovation, insight and a deep understanding of the Indian market.



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CURATED TO SERENADE YOUR SENSES



CRACK THE MYSTERY

Your fun, friendly guide to all things egg

Few foods are as everyday, and as surprisingly mysterious, as the egg. Is it vegetarian? Could there actually be a chick inside? What is that little red spot? Does a brown egg beat a white one? And why are some yolks almost orange?

Time to crack the mystery.



ARE EGGS VEGETARIAN?

In India, eggs are officially classified as non-vegetarian for food-labelling purposes. But there is an important distinction: the eggs we normally buy are generally unfertilised. There is no developing chick inside.

If you eat eggs but avoid meat and fish, ovo-vegetarian is the technically accurate term for your diet.

A hen lays eggs whether or not a rooster is around. Without fertilisation, there is no embryo and therefore no chick. Commercial table eggs are normally produced without roosters, so the egg in your breakfast is not a baby chicken in disguise.



BUT SOMEONE SAID A CHICK CAME OUT OF A COMMERCIAL EGG!

A chick can develop only from a fertilised egg, meaning a rooster must have had access to the hens. It is theoretically possible for a fertilised egg to enter the food chain, but it is certainly not the norm with commercial table eggs.

And a little red spot or piece of tissue inside an egg does not mean you've discovered a chick.



WHAT'S THAT BLOOD SPOT?

That tiny red or brown speck on the yolk is usually a blood spot, caused when a small blood vessel ruptures while the hen is forming the egg.

It isn't a chick or an embryo. You may also occasionally see a tiny piece of tissue called a meat spot. Neither means that a baby chicken was developing inside your egg.

WHAT COLOUR SHOULD THE YOLK BE?

Anything from pale yellow to deep golden orange can be perfectly normal.

Yolk colour is largely influenced by what the hen eats. Feed containing pigments such as those found in maize and other carotenoid-rich ingredients can produce a darker yolk.

So an orange yolk isn't automatically a healthier yolk.



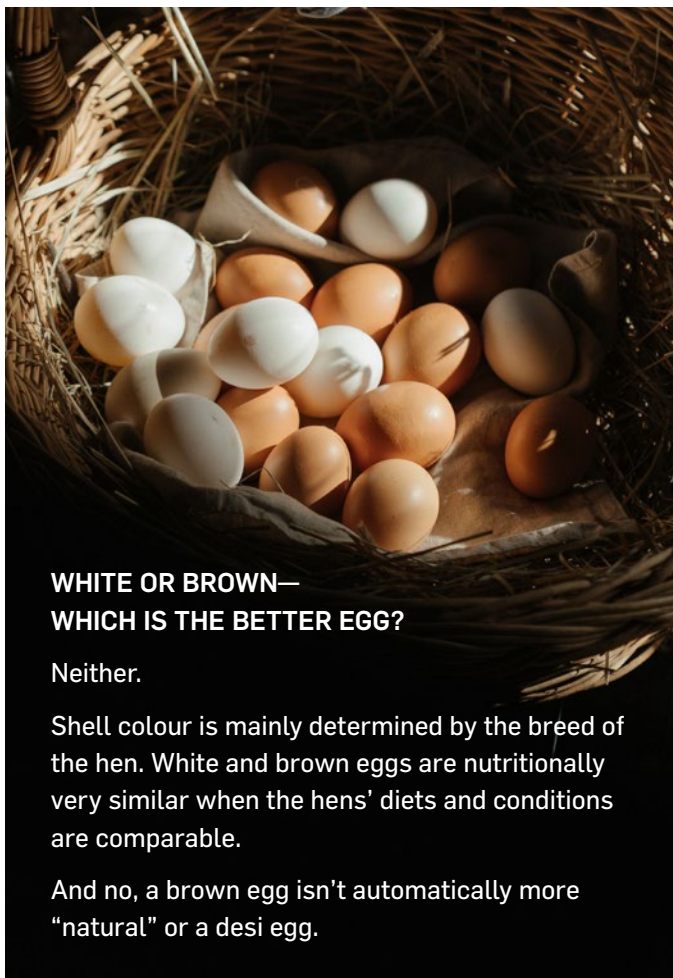


WHAT'S ACTUALLY IN AN EGG?

A medium egg, weighing roughly 50g, provides around 65–70 calories and 6g of high-quality protein, along with healthy fats and a useful range of micronutrients.

The yolk is where much of the nutritional action is. Eggs provide vitamin B12, selenium, riboflavin, vitamin A and choline, among other nutrients. Choline is particularly important for normal brain and nervous-system function.

And don't throw away the yolk in pursuit of "healthier" eggs: unless you have a specific dietary reason to do so, the whole egg is the more nutritious package.



WHITE OR BROWN— WHICH IS THE BETTER EGG?

Neither.

Shell colour is mainly determined by the breed of the hen. White and brown eggs are nutritionally very similar when the hens' diets and conditions are comparable.

And no, a brown egg isn't automatically more "natural" or a desi egg.



SO WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO EAT AN EGG?

There isn't one perfect method, but boiled, poached or lightly scrambled eggs are excellent everyday choices because they don't require much added fat.

Even better, make the egg part of a proper meal: scrambled eggs with vegetables, an omelette stuffed with spinach and other vegetables, boiled eggs with wholegrain toast, or an egg alongside dal, vegetables or a millet-based meal.

If you're frying, a little oil is all you need. What turns an otherwise nutritious egg into a much heavier meal is often everything that surrounds it—lots of butter, processed meat, refined bread and so on.

And unless you're certain your eggs are safe for raw consumption, cook them properly rather than eating them raw or very undercooked.

HOW DO I KNOW IF AN EGG IS FRESH?

A fresh egg generally has a firm white and a yolk that sits up nicely rather than spreading all over the pan.

You may also have heard of the float test. Older eggs develop a larger air pocket and can float in water. But floating tells you more about age than safety.

The simplest checks are: intact shell, sensible storage, date where available—and, after cracking, no unpleasant smell.





CAN I EAT EGGS EVERY DAY?

For most healthy adults, eggs can easily form part of a balanced diet. There is no need to regard them as either a miracle food or a dietary villain.

The bigger picture matters: what you eat with your eggs and what the rest of your diet looks like are more important than obsessing over a particular number of eggs.

SHOULD EGGS BE REFRIGERATED?

In India, particularly in hot weather, refrigeration is a sensible choice. FSSAI recommends keeping eggs refrigerated, preferably in the colder part of the fridge rather than the door.

Once refrigerated, keep them refrigerated rather than repeatedly moving them between hot and cold environments.



SHOULD I WASH EGGS BEFORE STORING THEM?

Better not.

Eggshells have a natural protective coating, and washing can remove some of it. If an egg needs cleaning, wipe it just before use rather than washing an entire batch and storing it wet.

WHAT ABOUT CHOLESTEROL?

Eggs contain cholesterol, but the old idea that eating eggs automatically means unhealthy cholesterol levels is far too simplistic.

For most people, an egg eaten as part of a balanced diet is perfectly reasonable. If your doctor has specifically advised you to restrict cholesterol, however, follow that advice.





01 TARTINE AU CHÈVRE (FRANCE)

French cafés adore open-faced tartines. Spread creamy goat's cheese over toasted sourdough and top with fresh figs, walnuts and a drizzle of honey. When figs aren't in season, pears or grapes work wonderfully.

SMART SWAP: Soft goat cheese from local artisanal dairies or even whipped cream cheese.





02

CROSTINI AI FAGIOLI (ITALY)

White bean purée with rosemary and olive oil on grilled bread.

SMART SWAP: Use rajma (red kidney beans) and basil leaves.



03

TOAST SKAGEN (SWEDEN – VEGETARIAN VERSION)

Traditionally topped with prawns, this vegetarian adaptation uses chopped cucumber, dill, crème fraîche, lemon zest and capers for a fresh Nordic flavour. Garnish with sliced radishes and fresh herbs.

SMART SWAP: Greek yoghurt can replace crème fraîche.







04

TORRADA (PORTUGAL)

Thick slices of rustic bread are grilled until crisp, then rubbed with garlic and generously drizzled with extra virgin olive oil. Finish with flaky sea salt.

Variations include sliced tomatoes, cheese, mushrooms or grilled peppers.

SMART SWAP: Use sourdough, pav or a country loaf.

MEMORIES ON A PLATTER

Published with permission from Penguin India.

By Rohini Rana

ABC Miracle Juice

APPLE, BEETROOT AND CARROT

20 minutes | Serves 4

On the fourth day after my husband's six-hour surgery, we were invited by the founder and chairman of the Apollo group of hospitals for an informal meeting at his office. My husband somehow managed to get into his shirt and trousers in spite of the surgery stitches, and off we went to meet the eighty-nine-year-old Dr Prathap C. Reddy, the man behind the vision of seven-three multi-speciality hospitals in India. A tall, soft-spoken, well-dressed gentleman, who had done his homework on my husband's military background as well as his current health problems. We were offered ABC juice—no coffee, no herbal tea or cold drinks—just the juice. This, the venerable doctor explained, is the most beneficial of all juices. Since then, I have been a fan of this extremely nutritional blend and enjoy a glass every morning with my breakfast. The ABC juice is available in the Apollo Proton Cancer Centre cafe in Chennai.

Ingredients

2 apples
2 small beetroots
2 carrots
1 tsp. ginger
¼ tsp. salt
½ lemon
2 cups water

Preparation

Wash and peel the first four ingredients, cut into 1-inch pieces and blend smooth with 2 cups water along with the other ingredients. Strain and serve in glasses, drink chilled or with a few ice cubes.

Chilli Mango Martini

20 minutes | Serves 4

Ingredients

¼ cup mango chunks
2 cups mango juice
1 lime cut in slices
1 tbsp. honey
2 tbsp./1 ounce rum/vodka
8–10 mint leaves
1 tbsp. crushed rock salt
1 tbsp. chilli flakes (optional)
2 tbsp. sugar
4 cans soda water

Preparation

In a plate mix the sugar, salt and chilli flakes, and in another saucer add some water. Upturn the glass you are serving the cocktail in, dip to line the rim of the glass in the water and repeat to line the rim with the sugar salt mixture. Put some crushed ice into pretty cocktail glasses and add the rum/vodka and a few chunks of fresh mango. Add mango juice, fill with the soda and garnish with a sprig of mint.



Rohini Rana, also known as Dolly, was born in India and married Gen. Gaurav S.J.B. Rana (former Chief of Army Staff, Nepal Army) in Nepal in 1977. During her meandering life as an army wife, she has played the part of a homemaker, social worker, entrepreneur, restaurateur and author. Cooking is her life's passion and following that road she has authored two books: *The Rana Cookbook: Recipes from the Palaces of Nepal* (2021), which focuses on Nepalese heritage cuisine, and *The Nepal Cookbook: 108 Regional Recipes* (2024), which shines a light on traditional Nepali food of the main ethnic communities. Thanks to the success of these two books, which have been the recipients of multiple local and global awards, Rohini is on her third venture encompassing her culinary journey around the world with *Memories on a Platter: My Fusion Cookbook*.



DESSERT STORM

FIVE DESSERTS ROCKING THE WORLD IN 2026

READY TO LOOSEN YOUR BELT?

01 CREATIVE THE SEASONAL ÉCLAIR, SEOUL

At Garuharu in Seoul, pastry chef Yun Eun-young, the first Korean to be named the World's Most Creative Pastry Chef by *LaListe*, treats every season as a new menu. One week, her éclairs are crowned with fragrant peaches; another, they're topped with strawberries, herbs or preserved fruit. It's a pastry counter that changes with nature's calendar, making every visit a surprise.

What is it? A classic French choux pastry filled with silky cream and topped with whatever fruit is at its seasonal peak.

Origin: Seoul, South Korea.

What does it taste like? Delicate, buttery pastry with light cream and intensely fresh fruit. Elegant rather than sugary.

Why it's a rage: The flavours are fleeting. Miss the season, and you've missed the dessert.

Calories: Approximately 250–350 kcal per éclair.

Best place to try it: Garuharu, Seoul.

Would we fly for it? Absolutely.



02

SHOWSTOPPER

MIRROR GLAZE CAKE

If desserts had a beauty pageant, this one would wear the crown.

Mirror glaze cakes look less like food and more like polished gemstones, with glossy surfaces reflecting light like coloured glass. This year, they've been joined by another social-media darling—the Dot Cake, decorated with painstaking rows of pastel sugar dots. Between them, they've turned cakes into edible works of art.

What is it? A mousse cake finished with an ultra-shiny mirror glaze or an intricately decorated sugar-dot finish.

Origin: Modern French pâtisserie.

What does it taste like? Rich mousse, silky glaze and melt-in-the-mouth sponge.

Why it's a rage: It's almost impossible to cut before taking a dozen photographs.

Calories: Around 350–500 kcal per slice.

Best place to try it: Contemporary pâtisseries across Paris, especially those specialising in modern French desserts.

Would we queue for it? Gladly. Just don't rush us with the photographs.



03

DECADENT BASQUE BURNT CHEESECAKE

Never judge this dessert by its appearance.

Its deeply caramelised top may look almost overbaked, but beneath lies a centre so soft, creamy and luscious that one bite explains why people travel to Spain just to eat it. Born in the Basque city of San Sebastián, the Basque Burnt Cheesecake has gone from local favourite to international superstar, appearing on the menus of Michelin-starred restaurants and neighbourhood cafés alike.

What is it? A crustless cheesecake baked at a very high temperature until the top is deeply caramelised while the centre remains deliciously creamy.

Origin: San Sebastián, Spain.

What does it taste like? Think crème brûlée meets cheesecake—rich, velvety, lightly smoky and utterly indulgent.

Why it's a rage: Rustic on the outside, luxurious on the inside. It's comfort food with gourmet credentials.

Calories: Approximately 500–700 kcal per slice.

Best place to try it: La Viña, San Sebastián—the restaurant where the original was born.

Would we plan a holiday around it? Without a second thought.





04

GUILT-FREE HIGH-PROTEIN DESSERTS

Who says dessert can't pull its own weight?

One of the biggest food movements of 2026 isn't about cutting Calories: it's about adding nutrition. Protein puddings, Greek yoghurt cheesecakes, sugar-free mousses and fibre-rich frozen desserts are proving that indulgence and wellness can happily coexist. The result? Desserts that satisfy both your sweet tooth and your fitness app.

What is it? Desserts made with higher protein, cleaner ingredients and significantly less added sugar.

Origin: A global wellness trend.

What does it taste like? Creamy, rich and surprisingly decadent.

Why it's a rage: People want treats that don't come with guilt attached.

Typical serving: 150–200g.

Calories: Around 120–250 kcal per serving.

Protein: Typically 10–20g per serving.

Best place to try it: Wellness cafés in London, Singapore, Sydney and New York.

Would we swap this for regular dessert? Some days, yes. Most days... we'll happily have both.

05 OFFBEAT

Invented in Germany, Spaghetti Ice Cream looks exactly like a plate of spaghetti and tomato sauce. The “pasta” is vanilla ice cream extruded through a potato ricer, the “tomato sauce” is strawberry purée, and the “Parmesan” is grated white chocolate or coconut.

It's playful, delicious, and genuinely makes people do a double take.

Would we fool our friends with it? Every single time.

Your turn: Which of these five would tempt you to book a ticket?



CULTURE

A WINDOW INTO OUR
BEAUTIFUL WORLD





Shhh: The Pub Capital Learns to Whisper

Photos: ZLB 23

By Nikunj Joshi & Avinash Bhat

Malls, gardens and movie theatres are passé. Bengaluru's hardworking crowd has found a new way to catch up with friends: speakeasies behind unmarked doors, down service elevators and through velvet curtains that don't announce themselves.

We found out about ZLB 23 through a friend who lowered her voice slightly when she said the name. "You don't walk in," she said, giving off distinctly Matrix-like vibes. "You have to text Zia." That was the entire pitch, and it worked.

A few days later, we were standing inside The Leela Palace Bengaluru, following instructions that took us past the grand lobby, through what looked like a working kitchen and into a service lift that had no business hiding one of Asia's best bars. The doors opened onto red velvet curtains. We pushed through them, and the last twenty minutes of ordinary evening fell away.

THE ROOM THAT TIME FORGOT

ZLB 23, or Zia's Lounge Bar, is built around a fiction: that somewhere in the legendary garden of a woman named Zia, a Prohibition-era hideaway has survived intact, and you are one of the chosen few invited in.

Every design choice commits to the story. The lighting is low and amber; the décor is glamorous, theatrical and vintage without feeling borrowed. Live jazz most evenings makes conversation more intimate and time more elastic. What struck us most was that the theatre never got in the way of the substance.

The cocktail menu combines Prohibition-era classics with Japanese-influenced originals that borrow from Kyoto's precision and elegance. The food keeps pace, arriving at a rhythm that feels considered rather than rushed.

None of this is exactly a secret anymore. In 2024, ZLB 23 was named Best Bar in India and ranked among Asia's 50 Best Bars, a fairly public unmasking for a

place built on discretion. Yet it has somehow retained the spark that makes a speakeasy work: the feeling, right up until you're seated, that you might not actually get in.

A CITY FULL OF LOCKED DOORS

ZLB 23 didn't invent Bengaluru's appetite for hidden bars, but it has become the reference point against which the city's newer speakeasies are measured.

At The Ritz-Carlton, The Cloak Society pushes the concept further into performance, styling itself as a theatre-inspired speakeasy where entry comes with its own small set of rules. In the CBD, other bars rely on blindfolds, unmarked doors and elaborate entry rituals. Vault21, for instance, offers exclusivity through just 21 seats and a ban on cameras and recording devices, with the journey to the bar designed to take you further from the bustle of Church Street.

The wider cocktail scene has absorbed the same instincts, from Kalyan Nagar's invite-only Number 86 to The Bunker Room at Una Hacienda. Bengaluru's bartenders, it seems, have collectively decided that a good drink deserves a story around it.





SPEAKEASY CITY

Why has this format taken off in a city where you can, technically, just walk into any bar you like?

Bengaluru has called itself the Pub Capital of India long before its tech boom. The city's drinking culture dates back to the late 1850s, when Scotsman Thomas Leishman established Castle Brewery. By the 1990s and 2000s, MG Road, Brigade Road, Church Street and Ulsoor were lined with pubs such as Styx, Pecos, Jimis, Guzzlers Inn and Nasa. It was loud, unpretentious and democratic: cold draught, rock music and a young crowd.

Then came the microbrewery revolution. Karnataka relaxed its brewing regulations ahead of most Indian states, and 2010 onwards, places such as Toit and The Biere Club changed what a night out meant. Beer was brewed on the premises in small batches and served in sprawling spaces designed for lingering. Today, Bengaluru has well over a hundred microbreweries.

The speakeasy is the pendulum swinging the other way. Where the microbrewery era was about abundance, more taps, more styles, more space, the

speakeasy trades on scarcity: one bar, one table, one bartender who remembers your order. It isn't really a contradiction. It is a city with a mature drinking culture looking for its next thrill. Bengaluru's drinkers have already explored volume and variety; now they're chasing secrecy and spectacle.

There is another appeal, too. Bengaluru's reputation is that of a comfortable, casual city where "smart casual" often loses to "casual". Speakeasies give people a reason to dress up and turn an ordinary Tuesday night into an occasion.

And underneath the theatre, there is real craft. The hidden door isn't a substitute for the drink in the glass; if anything, it raises the stakes on what that drink needs to deliver.

Walking out of ZLB 23 that night, back through the curtains, past the kitchen and into the bright hotel lobby, we understood the appeal. For a couple of hours, we hadn't just had a good drink. We'd been let in on something. In a city as sprawling and public as Bengaluru, that feeling, however manufactured, however much of it is design, is worth quite a lot.

1:9
Perfumery

THE GIFT OF GOOD TASTE

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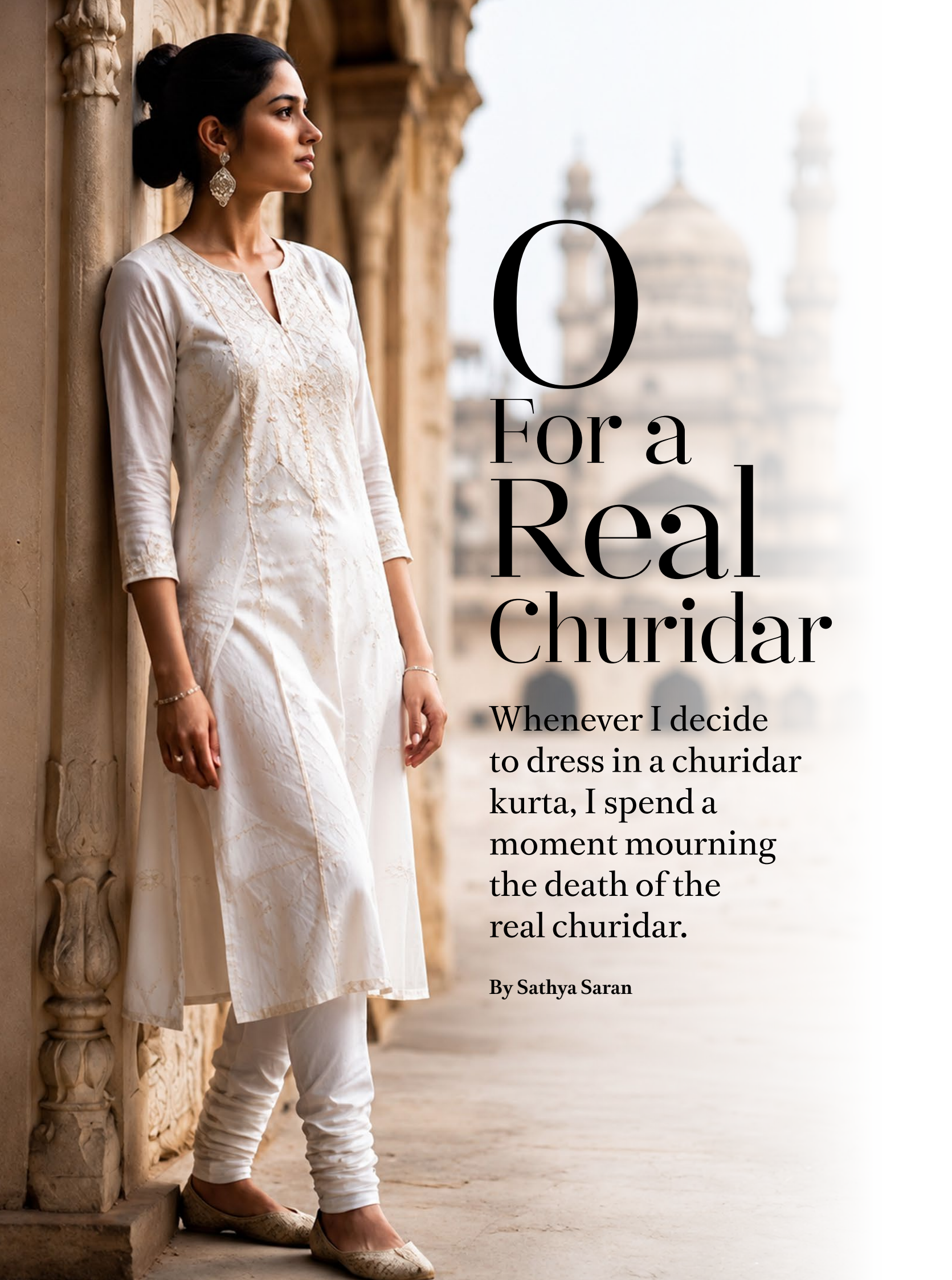
27% Oil • Tested in 45°C+ Heat & Sub-0°C • 90% Green Score



EXPLORE THE
COLLECTION



7-Day Easy Returns

A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a white churidar kurta with gold embroidery, stands on a balcony. She is looking to the right. The background shows a blurred view of a temple with domes and spires.

O For a Real Churidar

Whenever I decide to dress in a churidar kurta, I spend a moment mourning the death of the real churidar.

By Sathya Saran

D

on't ask me why, but the era when I lived in Hyderabad (which was an eon ago) was when I realised that one of the nicest things the city introduced me to was the churidar. Somehow, the salwar that I had favoured till then seemed baggy and boring, whereas the skin-tight, shapely, pipe-like churidar that ended in a plethora of gathers at the ankle seemed graceful. And as I pulled on my first pair of white ones, I felt like I was stepping into history. Here, indeed, was something a princess or a nawab's daughter would wear; it fitted so well with the buildings with their tiny minarets, the castle-like turrets of my college building, and with the flat mojris that went beautifully with the look.

However, I soon realised that churidars came for a price. They were cut on the bias to give them some leeway as you pulled them up; otherwise, the stitching or the fabric would surely give way. But they were still pretty much a



vice that held the thigh and the calf unrelentingly. The fact that there were gathers at the ankle meant that the garment had legs much longer than one's own, and so pulling it on in a hurry was quite impossible.

A terrible proposition indeed when one was always late getting ready and trying to make it to class on time.

Taking off the garment was another battle. The heat made the cotton stick to the skin, and finally a tussle would result before it could be peeled off...



But it was only when I attempted to ride a Hyderabad cycle-rickshaw that the real challenge presented itself.

Anyone who has sat in one of those typically Deccani contraptions that challenge modesty in the act of preserving it will know that one needs to sit in a ladylike manner, with legs folded at a steep angle along the body... almost as if one were sitting on a very low stool. In churidars, the entire operation of fitting oneself onto a rickshaw seat became a gymnastic act worthy of the Commonwealth Games, at least, and I did think that if the channel that thinks up those impossible balance games on TV had encountered the churidar-rickshaw combo, it would have added it as their ace challenge game without a murmur.

The challenge was in folding the knees without ripping the cloth, which at any time was anyway stretched to its bearable limit.

All this torture regardless, I loved the churidar and chose to wear it day in, day out.

Sadly, the garment that let us boast about discovering the fine art of creating garments cut on the bias has gone the way of the dodo. The modern-day churidar is a passing salute to the masterpieces of yore.

Leggings, tights, and other such garments, made of cotton or hosiery knits, have created substitutes that are easy on the pocket, in the wash, and on the leg. But they lack the whisper of history.

The tailor's expertise in creating a garment that defied the laws of wear and tear is absent in these new creations.

Where, O where, are the churidar makers of yore? Or is that an art that is lost too? Like the Dacca muslin and the zardozi, it needs to be revived. Is there a designer who can make the churidar walk among us again?



Sathya Saran
Former Editor, *Femina*
Consulting Editor, *Penguin Random House*

SELF

TAKE TIME TO NURTURE THE MOST IMPORTANT
PERSON IN YOUR LIFE—YOU!



Style Salon

Amore takes your design dilemmas to fashion luminary Payal Jain.

Blake Chikankari Dress



Photo: payaljain.com

01 WHAT'S A CHIKANKARI RED FLAG, WHICH SIGNALS POOR CRAFTSMANSHIP TO A TRAINED EYE BUT NOT TO THE AVERAGE BUYER?

Authentic hand chikankari has an unmistakable character. Having worked closely with the craft and its artisans for decades, I recognise it almost instinctively, the delicacy of the thread, the tension and rhythm of the stitches, the intricacy of the reverse side of the fabric, and the extraordinary depth created through different stitches and shadow work. The slight variations are the signature of the artisan's hand, and that human imprint is intrinsic to the beauty of the craft.

One of the biggest concerns today is the amount of machine embroidery being passed off as chikankari. It has flooded the market and, to an untrained eye, the distinction is not always easy to recognise. A machine can imitate the appearance of a motif, but it cannot replicate the finesse, dimension and intricacy of exceptional hand chikankari. When both are sold under the same name, the customer is misled and, more importantly, the value and understanding of the original craft are gradually eroded.

Equally worrying is the decline in the quality of hand chikankari itself. Loose threads, uneven stitches and inconsistent filling in the shadow work—so integral to the beauty and finesse of chikankari—are becoming increasingly common. The extraordinarily fine *ek-taar* and *do-taar ka kaam*, once hallmarks of the finest workmanship and associated with the refinement of the Mughal *zenanas*, have almost vanished. This level of work demands immense patience, precision and years of practice, and fewer young women are choosing to invest the time required to master these skills.

This, to me, is the larger concern. Preserving chikankari has to mean preserving its excellence, knowledge and integrity. The fineness of the hand, mastery of the stitch and generations of knowledge

are what give this craft its extraordinary value. Once those skills disappear, they cannot simply be recreated because the market rediscovers an interest in them.

The future of chikankari will depend on the value we place on exceptional craftsmanship today—ensuring that the finest artisans receive the recognition and economic value their work deserves, and that another generation sees both pride and possibility in carrying this extraordinary legacy forward.

02 IS THERE A GOLDEN RULE FOR ACCESSORISING A COCKTAIL DRESS?

For me, the golden rule in design has always been less is more. The strength of a garment lies first in its drape, fall, proportion and fit—how it takes the shape of the body, enhances your best features, moves with you and eventually feels almost like a second skin. Most importantly, it is about how the garment makes you feel when you wear it.

Rebecca Off Shoulder Dress



Photo: payaljain.com

I have always believed in a certain restraint in the way I design. Our cocktail and evening dresses often have a strong silhouette, defined by draping, construction and proportion, created in rich, luxurious fabrics. At times, the focus may be intricate embroidery, fabric manipulation or a special handcrafted detail. Each element is carefully considered because the garment itself must remain the starting point, whether it is created for an intimate celebration, a cocktail evening or the red carpet.

Accessories should complete that thought rather than compete with it. Sometimes one distinctive piece—a sculptural earring, a cuff, an heirloom jewel or even an extraordinary shoe—is enough to give the look character. I am particularly drawn to pieces that have meaning or memory, or simply feel inherently yours, rather than something chosen because it happens to be fashionable that season.

For me, accessorising is ultimately very instinctive. It comes from understanding the garment, knowing your own sense of style and, equally, knowing what to leave out. Personal style evolves over time; it becomes an expression of who you are rather than a reflection of every passing trend. When the garment and the accessories feel completely your own, there is a natural ease to the way you carry them—and that, for me, is where elegance lies.



Payal Jain is one of India's foremost and most iconic fashion designers, with over three decades of shaping the country's couture landscape. An FIDM, USA, graduate, she is renowned for her timeless designs that bring together India's rich textile heritage and artisanal craftsmanship with a contemporary sensibility. A pioneering champion of sustainability and the revival of traditional crafts, Payal has worked extensively with artisans and weavers across India, while championing handlooms, natural textiles and responsible practices. Her enduring influence extends beyond fashion through her academic work, environmental advocacy and commitment to preserving India's craft legacy for future generations.

1:9 PERFUMERY SCENT TO TEMPT YOU

For the few who rise quietly, move deliberately and leave a lasting impression, 1:9 Perfumery is a signature — for the one among nine.



Founded by Hyderabad-born engineer and fragrance curator Shravan Pullagura, 1:9 Perfumery grew from his years of wearing, buying and studying some of the world's best fragrances.

"What stood out to me was simple: price and performance do not always match," says Shravan. "That became the starting point for the brand — fragrances designed to perform on real skin, in real conditions, and over the course of a full day."

FOUR FRAGRANCES, ONE POINT OF VIEW

Each of 1:9 Perfumery's four fragrances boasts a distinct character.

01 RAEHL opens with mandarin and crisp apple, followed by nutmeg for a warmer, spiced character.

02 SIELLE brings together pear, bergamot and apple with muguet, freesia and peony, finishing with vanilla, musk and amber.

03 NYSS moves from berries, mandarin and bergamot into orange blossom, rose and lychee, with patchouli, musk and amber at the base.

04 AUREN combines bergamot, orange and pineapple with coriander, black pepper and rosemary, settling into ambergris, moss, musk and vetiver.



A GIFTING FAVOURITE

The Discovery Set brings together all four fragrances in 10ml formats. Soon after launch, it became one of 1:9 Perfumery's fastest-moving products — particularly for gifting.

Rather than choosing one fragrance for someone else, the set allows you to experience the collection and find your own favourite. It also reflects something central to our philosophy: good taste involves discovery and discernment. You try, you experience, and you decide what deserves a place.

WHERE SCIENCE MEETS SCENT

1:9 Perfumery's fragrances are formulated in India and tested in demanding climatic conditions. The brand focuses on concentration, molecule selection and fixation, with the aim of delivering consistent performance on skin.

Its fragrances use 25-27% fragrance oil concentration, placing them in the extrait de parfum/parfum-strength category. The higher concentration is designed to support slower evaporation, stronger skin adherence and longer-lasting diffusion.

For an Indian fragrance brand, testing in heat and humidity is particularly relevant. Performance cannot simply be measured in a controlled environment; it has to work through the conditions people actually live in.



THE CURATOR

Shravan Pullagura approaches perfume through both precision and curation. His role is not simply to create more fragrances, but to decide which ones are worth putting his name behind.

That idea is reflected in 1:9 Perfumery's approach to restraint. Ingredients are chosen for their contribution, formulations are refined for performance, and nothing is added simply because it sounds impressive.

The philosophy can be summed up in one line:

A good scent isn't loud. It lingers long enough to be remembered after you've left.

That is ultimately what 1:9 Perfumery is trying to achieve — fragrances that do not rely on a logo, a price tag or familiarity to make an impression. They simply have to earn it.

DISCOVER
1:9
PERFUMERY

Scan to explore
the collection



Going Zen

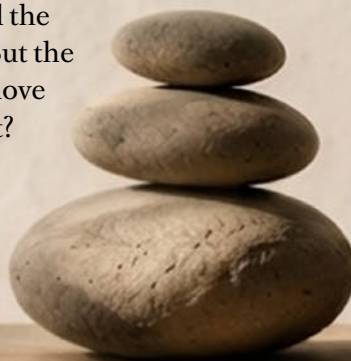
The Art of Staying Present

By Shubhra Krishan

A few weeks ago, a friend sat across from me, took a slow sip of her tea, and announced, “I’ve decided to go Zen.” She’d just stepped back from a project that had been chewing her up, and muted three WhatsApp groups on the way out. To her, going Zen meant exactly that – a wall between herself and the noise.

I laughed, mostly because I recognised the impulse. Then I went home and caught myself checking my phone at a red light, which felt like a fairly damning reply to the universe.

I want to be upfront: I haven’t figured any of this out. I’m not writing this from the other side of some transformation. I’m writing it from somewhere in the middle, still doing all the things I’m about to describe as if they were mistakes. But the question stayed with me – is there a different way to move through a day, and if so, where does a person even start?



What I've found, in a few weeks of reading and half-attempting things, is that Zen isn't the retreat I assumed it was. Nobody's asking me to feel less. If anything, it's asking me to notice more of what's already in front of me, which sounds easier than it is.

WHAT MY MIND ACTUALLY DOES ALL DAY

Most of my tiredness by evening has nothing to do with what I did that day. It's from the running commentary underneath it – the emails I'm half-reading while eating lunch, the conversation I'm rehearsing in my head while walking somewhere else entirely. My body shows up. My mind is usually two rooms ahead, negotiating with a future that hasn't happened yet.

Zen has one blunt question for this: what if you just did the thing you're doing?

I've tried it, in small doses. Making coffee, if I actually pay attention to it, takes five minutes and asks nothing of me except to notice water and heat. Listening to a friend, without half-composing what I'll say next, turns out to be a completely different activity than the one I usually do. Washing dishes stops being something to get through.

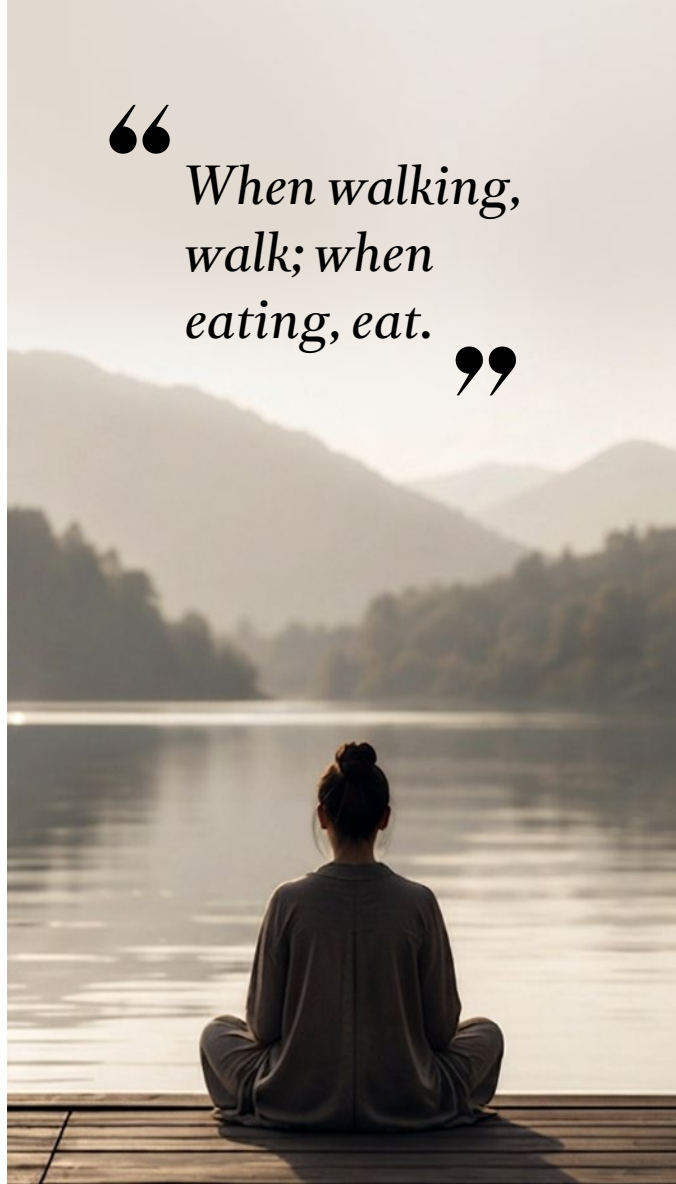
There's an old line – when walking, walk; when eating, eat – that sounds almost insultingly obvious until you try to do it for one meal. I lasted about four minutes before I picked up my phone. But in those four minutes, something in my head actually went quiet, which is more than I can say for most of my evenings.

NOT FIGHTING THE LEAVES, NOT CHASING THEM EITHER

The other place I've been slow and clumsy about this is with feelings. My instinct, when something stirs – a flash of anxiety, a flare of irritation at work – is to either shove it down or interrogate it until it confesses something. Zen offers a third option I hadn't really considered: you don't have to do either.

Instead of "I am anxious," which sounds like a life sentence, I've been trying "anxiety is visiting." It's a small shift in language but it changes the physics of the thing. I think of it like standing at a riverbank – the thoughts are leaves going past, and my habit has always been to jump in after each one. Staying on the bank and just watching them go, without fishing any of them out, is the actual practice. I'm bad at it. I jump in constantly. But I notice faster now when I've jumped.

“
When walking,
walk; when
eating, eat.
”



If you want to go further than my half-attempts, four things got me started. Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind* is short, plain, and somehow still the best single door in – his point that the beginner sees many possibilities while the expert sees only a few has stuck with me more than anything else I read. Thich Nhat Hanh is the person to read after that; there's a stillness in how he writes that slows your breathing down before you notice it's happening. The documentary *Walk With Me* (2017) follows his community of monastics with no plot and no urgency, which is rather the point. And if you'd rather listen than read, his talk on "stopping" does in twenty minutes what took me three books to half-understand.

NOTHING DRAMATIC, WHICH IS THE WHOLE POINT

I still multitask. I still get pulled downstream more often than I'd like to admit. But there's no exam at the end of any of this, no version of me that passes and one that fails. Just another ordinary moment, arriving whether I'm paying attention to it or not – and the option, each time, to actually be there for it.

WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE ABOUT... DISCIPLINE

By Chetna Srinivasan

I think the biggest mistake people make is trying to become a new person overnight. Tomorrow doesn't need to be your "perfect" day. It just needs to be the day you prove to yourself that you can keep a promise.

If I had to choose just three baby steps that would quietly improve almost every area of your life, they would be these.



01

MAKE YOUR BED AND RESET YOUR ROOM

"BEFORE 9 A.M. (10 MINUTES)"

This tells your brain: the day has begun.

Tomorrow morning:

- Make your bed properly.
- Put every piece of clothing where it belongs.
- Put shoes in one place.
- Clear your desk or bedside table.
- Throw away any rubbish.

That's it.

You don't need to organise the entire house. Just leave the room looking like the sort of room a disciplined person would walk into.

02

TAKE ONE DELIBERATE WALK

"20–30 MINUTES"

Forget calories.

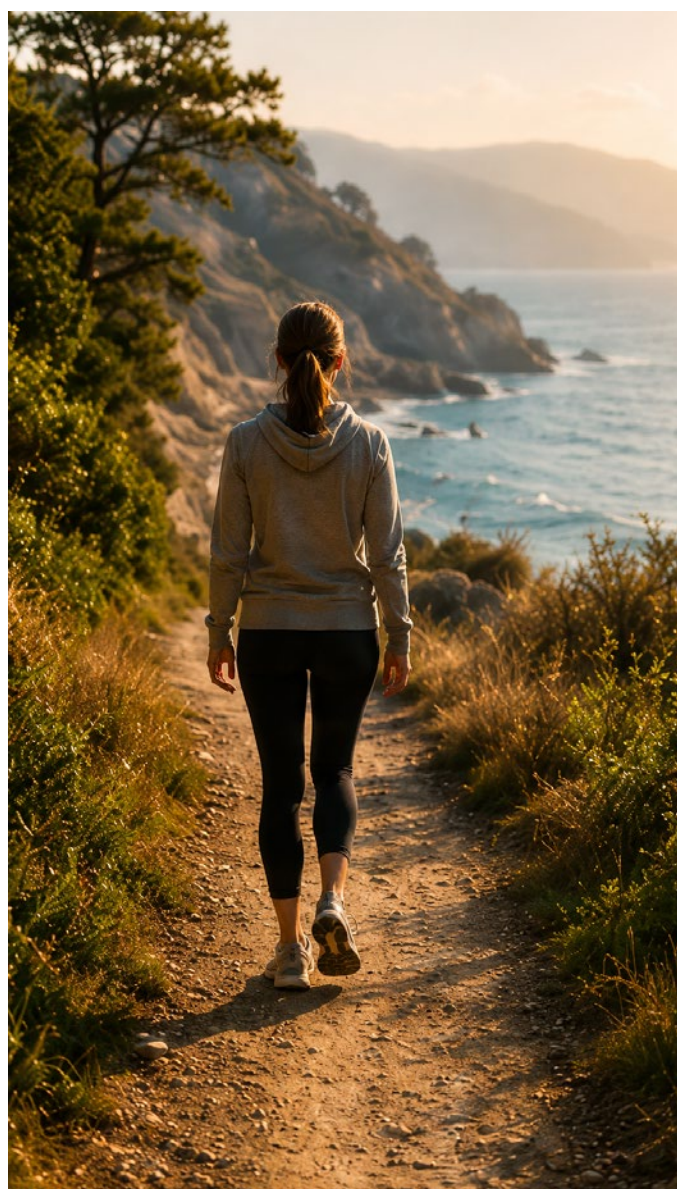
Forget weight loss.

Just walk.

No phone calls. No rushing. Simply walk at a comfortable pace and let your mind settle.

This one habit improves fitness, mood, sleep, discipline and even decision-making.

If tomorrow is all you manage, that's already a win.





03

END THE DAY WITH A 15-MINUTE “TOMORROW RESET”

Before going to bed, spend just fifteen minutes preparing for your future self.

During those fifteen minutes:

- Choose tomorrow's clothes.
- Keep your shoes ready.
- Fill your water bottle.
- Put anything you need near the door.
- Write the three most important things you want to finish tomorrow.

Then stop.

Don't make a list of twenty tasks.
Three is enough.



The thread connecting these three habits is simple: they reduce friction.

A messy room creates friction.

An inactive body creates friction.

An unplanned day creates friction.

Remove a little friction every day, and discipline begins to feel less like willpower and more like momentum.

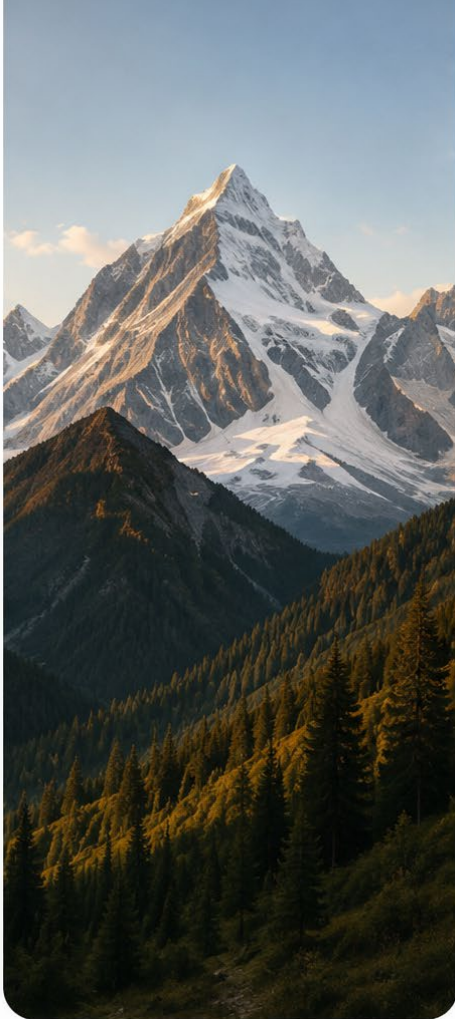


One final thought: for the next week, don't try to improve your diet, wardrobe, productivity system, finances and fitness all at once. Just ask yourself one question every evening:

“Did I keep the three promises I made to myself today?”

If the answer is yes, you've succeeded—even if the rest of the day wasn't perfect.

Those three small wins are enough to build on. Next week, you can add a fourth habit. After a few months, you'll be surprised how different your life feels, not because of one dramatic change, but because hundreds of tiny promises were kept.



"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

— Will Durant



LINES I LIVE BY

"Success doesn't come from what you do occasionally. It comes from what you do consistently."

— Marie Forleo



"First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do."

— Epictetus





A MEDIATION STORY

From Pain To Possibility

BY SHIRIN KHAJURIA



Sometimes, the strongest shared interest is simply the hope for a better future.

W

What if the darkness of the past becomes so overwhelming that it takes over our present, and yesterday's hurt begins deciding how we live today? And what if, somewhere in that darkness, there is still a small hope for a better tomorrow? Not by forgetting or minimising what happened, but by choosing not to let the past hurt our future.

I was reminded of this during a matrimonial mediation that came to me after almost five years of litigation.



Mediation can change the question from “Who was right?” to “What do I want my future to look like?”

The marriage had been arranged and solemnised during COVID-19. The couple lived with the husband’s parents in Mumbai. There was little privacy, much family interference and the couple never really had the opportunity to understand each other. Eventually, even conversation stopped. The wife returned to her parents. Attempts by the families to reconcile failed. Divorce proceedings, criminal cases and a claim for maintenance followed.

By the time the matter reached mediation, the husband stated he wanted reconciliation but the wife did not. She did not even want to speak to me, preferring that I speak with her parents. I requested them to convey to her:

“I am not asking her to go back to her husband. As a mediator I cannot decide for her and the decision will be completely hers. I am only asking her to tell me, in confidence, her side of the story so that we can try together to resolve the issues.”

That distinction mattered. Speaking did not mean accepting; it simply meant giving herself an opportunity to be heard.



Slowly, she switched on her video, put on the lights, uncurled herself and began to speak.

As I listened, I realised that the biggest obstacle was not a legal issue. It was anger, deep hurt and a stated desire for punishment. What she did not realise was that making them suffer was also keeping her tied to them, and the desire for revenge was continuing to control her life.



I did not ask her to forget or forgive. Instead, I asked:

“Picture yourself five years from today. When you look back at those five years, what would you hope those years looked like for you? What one step can you take today to choose that life?”

The conversation slowly shifted from the marriage to her – her choices and her next chapter.



The husband, on the other hand, felt deeply aggrieved by what he described as false allegations in the criminal cases filed against him and his family. Despite that, he stated he wanted a reconciliation.



The past may remain painful, but people can choose not to surrender their future to it.



I asked him, “Did you send any message to her in these five years asking her to join you?” He said, “No.”

Gradually the parties began discussing divorce by mutual consent, but then there was another impasse. They could not agree on the amount of alimony or on the return of *stridhan*. The husband’s family did not agree that all the gifts and jewellery, including ancestral jewellery ‘displayed’ during the marriage, formed part of her *stridhan* and were to be returned. The wife’s father insisted that all of it was *stridhan*, belonged in law to her, and be returned. The wife also sought substantial alimony, pointing to the difference in the parties’ incomes and the disruption to her life.

I spoke with the bride’s father. “To get the *stridhan* back, you may have to go through a long legal process. Your daughter is only 32 and may wish to remarry. Do you want her to remarry?” He answered: “Yes”.

That simple answer changed the conversation.

I then asked the groom’s father, “What do you want?”

The response was “We want a peaceful retirement, and the false criminal cases behind us.”

The settlement was no longer only about this marriage. It was also about the life the families wanted to build after it. As discussions became calmer, it softened the way the families looked at the past.

Eventually, the couple signed a mediated settlement agreement providing for the return of the *stridhan* articles, excluding ancestral jewellery, payment of permanent alimony, and appropriate steps towards bringing the pending criminal proceedings to an end as they moved towards mutual divorce.



But what has stayed with me is what happened at the end.

The respective fathers met at the mediation centre. As one father returned to the other father the jewellery given at the time of marriage, a lifetime of emotion played across their faces.

They then looked up at each other. For years, the two had seen each other through the lens of a dispute. On that day, they saw at each other simply as two families acknowledging that a marriage had not worked and that it was time to let it go.

In that quiet pivot, mediation found its true power.

Sometimes, the strongest shared interest is simply the hope for a better future.



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